

# "F-L-A-S-H" IS A SIGNAL OF A THRILL

Word As Used by the Associated Press, Greatest News Gathering Organization on Earth, is Like the Passage of a Comet and Will Come Shortly after the Polls Close November 7

NEW YORK, Oct. 28.—F-L-A-S-H! IS ELECTED! On the night of Tuesday, November 7, the missing name in the foregoing sentence will be supplied by the Associated Press.

In the business of news-gathering as developed by this world-wide organization, the first word sent over the wires telling of any extraordinary event is "Flash!" It is the signal of a thrill. The ordinary routine of the Associated Press bureaus and their hundreds of newspaper members is often punctuated with the "F-L-A-S-H!" Operators from Bangor to San Diego, from Tampa to Tacoma, tighten their lagging nerves, and editors come scurrying to the wires to hear a Pope is dead, a Titanic sunk, another country at war, a Lusitania torpedoed, a battle won, a king deposed, or a president elected.

Like a Comet. This latter thrill has a recognized periodicity, like the passage of a comet, and the experience of it is again imminent. Within a few hours after you have scratched your ballot, the Associated Press will have flashed the verdict which you and sixteen million fellow voters have rendered—will have flashed it within a few minutes after the last of these sixteen million ballots have been dropped in its box in some of the western states, where three hours' difference in time makes late the closing of the polls.

How, in this brief time, anything approximating an accurate accounting of these sixteen million votes can be achieved, the returns assembled, and the result made known throughout the land is a process both simple and marvellous. It is true, of course, that all of these sixteen million votes are not counted, but when the Associated Press announces the election, that announcement will be as trustworthy as if they were.

The gathering and distribution of

returns this year will mark one of the greatest co-operative efforts that has been made on any similar occasion to accomplish this purpose. In previous elections the Associated Press, relying largely upon its own resources, has done notable work in the prompt and accurate reporting of the election figures. In the Roosevelt-Parker contest of 1904 the organization was able not only definitely to announce the result, but also to indicate the full extent of the victory as early as 8 o'clock on election night. Equally remarkable service has been rendered in other elections, and the value of the Associated Press's figures has been such that defeated candidates themselves have, on the strength of them, sent their telegrams of congratulation to their victorious opponents. The service has been such that it has invariably brought to the executives of the organization a flood of telegrams on the day after in tribute to the "comprehensiveness," "speed" and "accuracy" with which the work has been done. This year it is possible that all records will be broken, for the Associated Press has for the coming election enlisted the co-operation of its members from coast to coast in a more concerted effort than ever before.

Covering the News. More than two years ago preparations were begun, under the direction of the general manager of the Associated Press, to "cover" the news which will be served to the public on the night of November 7. Election experts of the organization have during these two years canvassed every state in the union and arranged with the papers of each state to work together on a co-operative basis under the supervision of the established Associated Press bureaus. Thousands of special forms have been prepared for

the systematic conduct of the service, thousands of typewritten sheets distributed listing candidates and showing votes four years ago as a basis of comparison, special correspondents appointed and special wire facilities arranged for this particular work.

In the collection of returns, the county is everywhere made the unit, and it is the purpose of the system to hear definitely from every election district of the more important states. In New York alone these districts number 5,700. In Illinois there are over 5,000 and in other states a proportionately large number of districts to be heard from. Taking New York state as typical of the system that will be followed in principle at least by other states, the service there is worked out broadly as follows:

Having arranged for some competent man to take charge of each county up-to-date and for co-operative effort with the New York City News Association for the collection of the metropolitan returns, the New York headquarters of the Associated Press is made the center of tabulation. The up-to-date county man is stationed at the most convenient center, usually the county seat, from which he throws out his net for the gathering of his local returns.

Special Work in Hand. For the special work in hand, twenty-five extra wires are strung into the Associated Press offices in New York, giving direct and exclusive connection with the principal cities. Before the operators are stacked a varied assortment of printed forms, whose blank spaces await the figures that tell the story. There are pink forms, blue forms, buff, green, yellow and white to make the various compilations of the vote for president, governor, Senate, Congress and the two houses of the state legislature.

In an adjoining room there have been assembled a staff of a hundred men to serve as tabulators. Previous to the election the Associated Press has arranged with some of the best banks in the city to furnish expert accountants for this work. They work in relays, the first crew reporting at the close of the polls at five o'clock, compiling the figures until two o'clock in the morning.

Less than ten minutes after the closing of the polls, the work begins. The first returns in New York are invariably from some of the up-state cities, where voting machines are employed. There are, however, some localities on Cape Cod and down in Maine which for years have prided themselves on being the first in with their vote. In such small places the law permits the opening of the ballot boxes as soon as it has

been made certain that the full vote of the place has been polled and the results then made known.

First Figures Dribbled. It is only by dribbles that the first figures come in, but once the avalanche is started there is no let-up to the tick of the telegraph sounders, and a swarm of the colored blanks is kept flying from the receiving operators to the tabulators. The figures are first entered by the designated chief passed along to the designated chief who keeps a "Doomday Book," showing the running total of the vote throughout the night. Every fifteen minutes the business of tabulation is punctuated by the issue of a bulletin on New York state, which is rushed to the leased trunk wires of the Associated Press—and over these main arteries and secondary ones—some 47,000 miles of them, some eighty different circuits—the news circulates, keeping all of the nine hundred and forty newspaper members of the association posted on how the country is going.

The form of these bulletins is known to thousands who have seen them flashed on the election screens: "506 election districts out of 5,700 in New York state, for president, give: Wilson—; Hughes—"

Bulletins Grow. So, district by district, these bulletins grow until it looks so certain to some of the experts that one paper or another will concede somebody's election. But the Associated Press concedes nothing. It must know.

In the year of the Odell-Coler fight for governor in New York in 1900, its system had a severe test. Coler ran up a big vote in New York City, and the heavy vote of Odell upstate was overlooked by many of the newspapers which conceded Coler's election. The Associated Press, in the midst of this confusion was led to wonder if its figures were right. The general manager had an abiding confidence in his men and figures, but in the face of concessions that some of the papers were making of Coler's election, something must be done to check the matter. He ordered a recount. The system provided for just such an emergency, and this Odell-Coler year is the only time it has ever been called into play. All of the county returns, after being tabulated, are hung on a large rack of hooks, classified by counties, where they are immediately available for recount. Off the hooks came these hundreds of telegrams, and in just fifteen minutes' time the entire state vote was recounted. The head tabulator, forgetting for the moment that he was in a newspaper office, instead of his bank, exclaimed:

"Mr. Stone, we check to a penny!" The recount tallied exactly with the figures the Associated Press had previously given out and the papers which, independently of the Associated Press figures, had conceded Coler's election had eventually to admit their error.

The accuracy of the Associated Press figures has seldom since been questioned. In connection with the recent New York state primary, in the fight between Coler and Bacon for the Republican nomination as candidate for a seat in the United States Senate, the majority given by the Associated Press was only seventy-nine votes at variance with the official count. In a Massachusetts state election last year the Boston bureau scored a record by announcing the returns only three votes off from the official figures.

Election Machinery. The election machinery of the Associated Press is at work in all the states, but it is developed to its highest pitch of efficiency in the states having the largest electoral votes and the smallest average of constituency in presidential years.

Given a definite line on New York state, on Massachusetts, which is invariably prompt, and a reflection of the vote in central and western states, where a difference in time is a handicap to early returns, the result of the presidential election may be pretty definitely announced at an early hour and often the full extent of the victory indicated, so accurately has the gauge of election figures been fixed by previous experience.

Knowing with a near certainty whether it is Wilson or Hughes will be sufficient for the throngs at the bulletin boards on election night, but the Associated Press goes on to a still bigger task than the mere announcement of the result. That would not go far to complete the morning paper. There are columns to fill with state tabulations, with lists of governors elected, the detailed constitution of the next United States Senate and the House of Representatives.

There is one human cog in the election night machine that is even more interesting than the general manager of the Associated Press. As is the Paul Revere of the backwoods districts who gallops his horse or drives his motorcycle on election night to the nearest telegraph station. There are still some remote regions—a great many of them—where the polling of a presidential vote is almost a game of solitaire, and from some of them couriers must ride twenty miles before they can release by wire to a waiting nation the fact that a plurality of one for—it would be partisan to anticipate the name) had been cast at Ranch 49.

There are several such remote districts even in New York state where news leaks almost as slowly as in Montana or Idaho. And there is no deprecating the importance of the vote that is cast at Clover Four-Corners. It is the will of the people that rules, and the Associated Press can know no distinction when it comes to the counting of honest ballots. Otherwise it would not pay for that twenty-mile ride.

New Jersey has been a thorn in the flesh of the election tabulators for many years. In the first place it refuses to close its polls until 7 o'clock, and its laws requires that the counting of the entire ballot from top to bottom shall be completed before another ballot is taken up. There are upwards of 240 names on the Jersey ballot this year in some of the cities, and it is doubtful whether on election night President Wilson will know how his own state has gone. The Jersey method is employed in some of the central and western states, adding a further handicap to the difference in time, but New York and a majority of the eastern states

put the presidential electors on a separate ballot to facilitate the count.

Wires Devoted to Returns. If the foregoing has not helped you to visualize the process by which the greatest news-gathering organization tries to satiate your election curiosity and furnish masses of figures to back up its announcement of the victory, picture to yourself this one fact: On election night the facilities for wire communication over practically the entire country are for the moment devoted almost exclusively to the collection and distribution of returns. The mileage of those wire you will find run up into the millions. The Associated Press leased wire system itself, is almost doubled on election night, and the telegraph companies in their own way are co-operating directly or indirectly in the great effort to bring the figures to a head.

Consider also the human factors—thousands of operators at the key paper reporters and editors at work on local situations, while the army of trained Associated Press men are assembling all their matter, and you arrive at something like a general glimpse of the efforts that will be made on election night to supply the missing name in the first sentence of this article.

Surpassing though it will public interest in the great war, or in the multitudinous events that the world daily contributes to the excitement of the breakfast table, the news of a presidential election will by no means attract all of the argus-eyes of the organization whose field is the world. So elastic is the system of this clearing house for news, that its correspondent in Peking may come in at the height of excitement over the election with a new revolution in China, its representative in Panama with a disastrous slide in Culebra cut, its bureau in Petrograd with a stirring speech in the Duma, or its men at the front with a great victory. The usual designated men are on deck to handle any emergency, in the election or out of it.

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## If a Candidate Should Die

Voting at Presidential Election Would Proceed in the Usual Way. (Philadelphia Ledger.)

Suppose one of the candidates for president of the United States were to die the night before election, how would that situation be handled?

That question comes to us from the manager of a large industrial plant. Answer:

Nothing would happen. The election would be held on November 7 and the voting would proceed as usual.

We do not vote for either Charles E. Hughes or Woodrow Wilson. Their names will not be on the ballot. What we do vote for is a set of presidential electors, none of whose names we bother to learn.

One set of electors if it wins is expected to cast the state vote for Hughes and the other set, if it wins, for Wilson.

Not Legally Bound. But the Republican electors if successful in election, are not legally bound to cast their ballots in the electoral college for Mr. Hughes. They could vote for anybody who is qualified under the United States constitution to hold the office of president. The Republican electors could legally vote for President Wilson.

An elector is an independent agent. As a matter of practice he will vote for the candidate chosen at a party convention last June, but he can legally break the instruction, just as a delegate to the convention could have done.

Hence if either presidential candidate were to die the day before the election all the states would on the following day vote for their two sets of presidential electors in the routine way.

These presidential electors who are chosen in November are obliged to meet in the various states on the second Monday in January following. That is the day the president of the United States is actually chosen.

That these electors were intended to be free agents and to act as they deemed best is plainly inferred by the twelfth amendment to the constitution of the United States. It says:

"They shall make distinct lists of all persons voted for as president and all persons voted for as vice president."

When that amendment was adopted after the Jefferson-Burr battle of 1801 there never had been any political conventions and the presidential electors of the various states were expected to form as many conventions and there to choose a president.

In practice the presidential electors act merely as automatons. They permit the national conventions to do their thinking.

Up to National Committee.

If one of the candidates selected by either convention were to die the national committee of that party would some time after November 7 and prior to the second Monday in January, designate a candidate.

That recommendation would carry all the weight of a national convention. But, as we have said, in neither case is the recommendation binding.

Since national conventions were first held in Andrew Jackson's time, no presidential candidate has died before the election.

When Van Buren was elected president no one was elected vice president. The United States Senate then exercised its prerogative and elected R. M. Johnson vice president.

A presidential elector in a New England state refused to follow his party and vote for James Monroe. "Just so he could not be unanimously elected," as was George Washington."

Eleven states did not vote at all for president in 1864. In 1868 three states that had tried to secede could not vote.

In 1890 one of California's presidential electors who had been chosen by the Democrats refused to vote for Hancock. That state, therefore, gave Garfield one elector and Hancock five.

## INDIANS NOT A DYING RACE, SAYS CATO SELLS

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28.—The race of Indians is no longer a dying race, according to Cato Sells, United States commissioner of Indian affairs, who has returned to Washington after a tour of inspection. He finds there are 350,000 Indians in twenty-four states, settled on eighty reservations. The death rate has been reduced by a vigorous health campaign and the birth rate is increasing. The wealth of the Indians is about \$900,000,000 and includes 60,000,000 acres of land.

Mr. Sells observes that the Indian problem has changed in recent years and that the red man is looming up as a race which will hold its own. There are more Indians now than at any time since the bureau on Indian affairs was established.

## SISTER TRIED TO BREAK UP THE WEDDING WITH AN AXE

MACON, Ga., Oct. 28.—Miss Elizabeth Haddock and T. D. Ingram, the latter blind, were united in marriage here, while the police stood guard to prevent an enraged sister of Miss Haddock from renewing trouble which a short time previous had broken up the wedding ceremony.

Just as the Rev. T. F. Callaway was about to pronounce the magic words, Miss Mary C. Haddock, it is alleged, burst in the door of the room with an axe. Mr. Callaway fled from the scene and did not return. The police were called and after Miss Haddock had been quieted, Dr. W. N. Ainsworth was called and pronounced the couple man and wife.

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